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How can context affect what strategies are effective in improving the working environment in small companies?

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Background
Small companies include many different sectors and types of organisations. Additionally the small companies are affected by clients, authorities and other stakeholders. Some of these contextual factors have been proven to be of relevance to and affect the work environment management, e.g. in cleaning companies, where many aspects of the working environment is decided by the client company, whose premises is cleaned by the cleaning company.

Aim
To discuss what factors in small companies’ context may affect the outcome of work environment interventions as a theoretical basis for evaluation of what factors that may have affected the outcome of work environment interventions and programs in small companies.

Discussion
The context is a convenient and simple term covering a multitude of factors and complex relations. It is unavoidable to discuss context when aiming at understanding small enterprises and what factors that will influence their work environment. There are several examples of initiatives and tools that have been relying on specific contextual conditions. Some of these will be discussed e.g. what contextual factors hampered the implementation of control measures that reduce the formation of isocyanates in car bodywork and how good neighbor schemes were developed to make use of close relations between large companies and their small company subcontractors. Other examples show the use of procurement demands as a way to clarify the demands on small companies on a sound and safe working environment in small asbestos stripping companies and cleaning companies. Another example shows how integration with other areas such as the importance to avoid not only exposure to flour dust in bakeries but also to avoid spreading of flour dust in order to avoid the growth of bugs in bakeries.

A framework for analyzing the context and evaluating the relevance of the context on strategies programs etc. to improve the working environment will be discussed.

Different contextual factors will be discussed from a theoretical point of view. The context and how it may affect the outcome of different kinds of strategies etcetera to improve the working environment will be further scrutinized in the project SESAME, which aims at developing strategies to improve the working environment in SME:s.